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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9242  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 3694  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO IMMEDIATE 3967  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA IMMEDIATE 9003  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE 1930  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 3387  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 8841  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE 0167  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 1038  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1705  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 002568

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NSC FOR RICHELSON

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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CVIS](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: FM PANDEY: NO PROGRESS ON BHUTANESE REFUGEES

REF: A. NEW DELHI 8893

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 1819

Classified By: Amb. James F. Moriarty, Reason 1.4 (b/d)

FM Doubts Bhutan Commitment to Start Returns  
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[1](#)1. (C) In a November 23 discussion with the Ambassador, Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey relayed the gist of his unfruitful discussion with the Bhutanese Foreign Minister held on the margins of the SAARC meeting in Dhaka. Pandey lamented that, after having agreed in writing in September to take back the Categories 1 and 4 refugees from Khudunabari, the RGOB now seemed intent on stalling the repatriation process. (Note: This is a sharply different description of recent RGOB-GON communications on the refugee issue than that provided ref A. End note.) Pandey said that the Bhutanese FM had reiterated the proposal that Pandey visit Thimpu prior to any repatriation. Pandey had again rejected such a visit until after Bhutan had begun implementing the agreement to repatriate refugees. The Bhutanese FM had then suggested that Bhutan send a team to Khudunabari to explain what the returnees could expect upon their return. Pandey pushed back strongly, fearing a repeat of the December 2003 events when the Bhutanese officials' discussion with the refugees had provoked a near riot in the Khudunabari refugee camp. Pandey had emphasized to his Bhutanese counterpart the need to start the repatriation process, as Nepal and Bhutan had earlier agreed.

[1](#)2. (C) Very concerned about Bhutan's apparent intransigence, Pandey told the Ambassador that he was considering writing another letter to the RGOB urging the Bhutanese to implement their agreement to take back the refugees. The Ambassador suggested that Pandey give the Bhutanese a reasonable date, i.e., one-two months, to start the return process, failing which, Nepal would internationalize the problem. The FM welcomed the idea.

[1](#)3. (C) Pandey stressed that Nepal's primary concern was the fate of the ethnic Nepalis still living in Bhutan; he feared

that if there were no returns, Bhutan would conclude that it could get away with another round of ethnic cleansing. The FM emphasized that it was important that Nepal not take any steps that could relieve the pressure on Bhutan to start repatriating its citizens. He explained that was the reason Nepal had not issued travel documents to the three minor girls, one of whom was raped (ref B). Although he recognized the case was urgent and valid on humanitarian grounds, he reiterated that, at this time, Nepal would not take any steps to ease the pressure on Bhutan by setting a precedent of resettling Bhutanese refugees in third countries. The Ambassador noted that the current situation also did not appear to provide any checks on the possibility of future expulsions by the RGOB; if returns were never going to occur, it would be better for the international community to clearly denounce the 1990 expulsion and begin resettling the refugees. Pandey agreed and reiterated that setting a deadline for action by the RGOB could be the way to go.

#### Tibetan Refugees

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¶4. (C) The Ambassador pushed the Foreign Minister to register the Tibetan Welfare Society. Pandey responded that the USG should focus on the protection of the welfare of Tibetan refugees and not pursue a "political issue." The Ambassador agreed that ensuring the refugees' safe transit to India was important. He noted that it was our hope that the Lutheran World Federation would prove a reliable and efficient partner for UNHCR.

#### Travel Documents For "Follow-to Join" Cases

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¶5. (C) The Ambassador raised our concern about our long-standing request that the government issue travel documents to allow Tibetan refugees resident in Nepal to emigrate to "follow-to join" relatives who have been granted asylum in the U.S. The Ambassador noted that this could become a major issue for the USG. The Foreign Minister took note and said he would look into it.

MORIARTY